

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Peter DeFazio (OR-04) today led democrats in the Oregon Congressional Delegation in fighting to save at least 500 family-wage, private sector jobs. DeFazio and his colleagues sent a letter to Congressman Jim Moran, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Environment, asking that he support the 2010 funding levels for managing 2.2 million acres of Oregon and California (O&C) Lands in Western Oregon.

President Obama's proposed budget would cut funding for resource management activities by \$10 million, or 11 percent. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) estimates that this budget cut would have a devastating impact on their ability to offer timber projects, would cost Oregon 500-600 family-wage jobs, and reduce the amount of marketable timber the agency is able to offer in fiscal year 2011 by 45 million board feet.

This budget cut comes in the wake of the Administration's withdrawal of the Bush Administration's Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR)- forest plan revisions that would have significantly increased logging of old growth forests in Western Oregon. The plans were administratively withdrawn by Secretary Salazar because the Department of Interior deemed the Bush Administration-era plans legally and scientifically indefensible.

After administratively withdrawing the WOPR, Secretary Salazar and the Obama Administration promised a sustainable and predictable supply of timber to timber-dependent communities and the timber industry in the interim, as the BLM works on a long-term forest management strategy. In the DeFazio-led letter to Chairman Moran, Oregon's democrats question the Administration's ability to make good on this promise with a dramatically reduced budget for O&C Lands.

“The bottom line is we need jobs. The real unemployment rate well exceeds 20 percent in a number of southwest Oregon communities. By restoring the O&C budget to this year’s level – not even an increase - we can preserve or create hundreds of jobs, provide a predictable supply of timber to timber-dependent communities, and continue to address the forest health issues facing Western Oregon. That’s good deal for the federal government and Oregon’s economy,” DeFazio said.

The letter is below:

The Honorable James Moran

Chairman

Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Room B-308 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Moran:

First, we are writing to offer our congratulations on being approved as the new chairman of the Subcommittee on Interior and Environment. We look forward to working with you in your new capacity to responsibly manage our public lands, protect rural communities and the environment.

Second, we are writing to bring to your attention a matter of critical importance to the economic security of rural communities in Western Oregon and the health of west-side Oregon forests. We are requesting that you support the fiscal year 2010 funding level of \$97 million for the Department of Interior, Western Oregon Resource Management account for fiscal year 2011.

Western Oregon contains 2.2 million acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) forests called Oregon and California (O&C) Lands. Many of these acres are overstocked, fire-suppressed, and in need of responsible forest management. Recent data provided by the BLM shows that approximately 1.1 million acres of O&C Lands are in need of ecological restoration and could be treated if the funding was available.

O&C Lands have a long history dating back to the 1937 Oregon and California (O&C) Lands Act. These 2.2 million acres of forests and the 1937 O&C Act have been at the center of the Pacific Northwest "forest wars" for more than two decades.

Most recently, the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR) - forest plan revisions developed to dramatically increase logging in Western Oregon - were administratively withdrawn by Secretary Salazar because the Department of Interior deemed the plans legally and scientifically indefensible.

Given the absence of a definitive forest plan for Western Oregon to offer responsible timber projects in the short-term while the Department of Interior works on a long-term forest management strategy, we want to express our collective concern about the President's proposed cut to the Western Oregon Resource Management budget account for fiscal year 2011. This account funds resource management activities on O&C Lands.

The President's proposed cut would reduce the Western Oregon Resource Management account from \$97 million appropriated in fiscal years 2009-2010 to \$86 million in fiscal year 2011. As the Obama Administration continues to work on a forest plan for Western Oregon, it is not clear to us how the Administration intends to make good on its promise to provide a more predictable and sustainable timber supply to rural communities and the timber industry with a significantly reduced budget.

The proposed \$10 million (or 11%) cut would have a devastating impact on the ability of the BLM to offer responsible and much needed timber projects to address forest health issues on O&C Lands and directly result in the loss of hundreds of family-wage, private-sector jobs. The Bureau of Land Management estimates that a \$10 million cut will result in the loss of 500-600 Oregon jobs and reduce the amount of merchantable timber the agency is able to offer in fiscal year 2011 by 45 million board feet. With unemployment above 20% in many rural Oregon communities, the President's proposed cuts will exacerbate the already dire economic conditions in these rural communities and continue the negative trend of a loss in valuable timber infrastructure.

We respectfully request that you support the fiscal year 2010 funding level of \$97 million for the Department of Interior, Western Oregon Resource Management account in fiscal year 2011. While we understand the difficult budget constraints you face this year, maintaining the fiscal year 2010 funding level for this account will save and create private-sector jobs while simultaneously helping the federal government address the enormous backlog of work that needs to be completed on O&C Lands.

In the long-term, Oregon needs a workable forest policy that addresses two unresolved issues: certainty in timber supply to the timber industry and rural communities and protecting old growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. For too long, our timber-dependent communities have suffered from false starts and false promises, litigation, and controversy. They deserve better. We are committed to continuing our work with you, our colleagues in Congress, and the Department of Interior to craft a long-term, responsible forest management plan for Oregon.

Again, congratulations on your chairmanship. Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Peter DeFazio

Kurt Schrader

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer

David Wu

Member of Congress

Member of Congress